

DVD WRITERS

INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing popularity of network attached storage devices, DVD writers are still an easy and convenient way to back up important files and share video and photographs with friends, family and colleagues.

Even if your computer already has a DVD writer, adding another one makes tasks such as copying discs or burning multiple discs at the same time easy. If you have an older notebook, it's easy to add DVD-burning capability with an external USB DVD writer, which is far easier to fit than an internal one.

With so many models available, choosing a DVD writer can be daunting. This month we've done the hard work for you by gathering together nine internal drives and nine external USB models, four of which are designed for portable use. Read on to find the right one for your needs.

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PC systems and storage expert

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BURN TO WIN

Whether you want to produce DVDs for backups or to distribute your own movies, you're sure to find the perfect burner in this round-up of 18 internal and external writers

Choosing a... DVD Writer

Manufacturers often make grand claims about the write speeds of their DVD writers.

However, you're unlikely to achieve these speeds when writing single-layer DVDs, as the results of our tests on page 120 show. In some cases we did come close to achieving the maximum stated speeds when burning two-layer and rewritable DVDs. For the quickest and most reliable results, choose reliable, branded media such as Memorex or Verbatim.

PLUG AWAY

Four of the internal drives here have SATA connectors instead of the older PATA interface. SATA cables are less cumbersome to install than the ribbon-like PATA cables, and motherboard manufacturers are slowly phasing out PATA in favour of SATA. However, the fastest internal drives in our tests have PATA connectors, even though they are theoretically slower than SATA.

All the external drives connect to your PC or laptop using USB Hi-Speed. Five of them are designed for use on your desk so they're bulky and need power from a socket, but they can be just as fast as an internal drive.

The other four are portable. They're small enough to slip into a laptop bag and can be powered by the USB

connection. Some come with mains adaptors and are faster when plugged in, but all portable writers are still slower at burning discs than their desktop counterparts.

EXTRA HELP

Although Windows XP and Vista have basic CD and DVD burning support, dedicated utilities such as Ahead's Nero or Roxio's Easy Media Creator are more powerful. Basic versions of these utilities are included with most of the drives here. Some internal drives sold without retail packaging don't come with any software, instructions or accessories such as cables or mounting screws. These drives are branded OEM and are usually cheaper than their packaged counterparts.

PENS DOWN

Laser labelling uses the drive's laser to etch text or images on to specially coated discs. The most popular laser labelling technology, LightScribe, is supported by 10 of the drives in our group. Labelflash is supported by only one internal drive in the group.

A report by an agency of the US Department of Commerce recommends using laser labelling instead of adhesive or handwritten labels to avoid damaging discs. ➔

INTERNAL DVD WRITERS

AOPEN
DSW2012P
(OEM)

★★★

£22 inc VAT
From www.pcnextday.co.uk

Aopen's DSW2012P is one of the cheapest burners in the group at £22. However, while it was the second-fastest internal writer at burning CD-R discs, it wasn't very quick at writing DVDs. It was one of the slowest internal drives at writing single-layer DVDs, DVD-RW and DVD+R DL discs. It was faster writing DVD+RW and DVD-R DL discs, with 6.57X and 5.5X, but other DVD writers in the group were much faster than the DSW2012P in these tests.

Although the DSW2012P doesn't come with any accessories such as alternative front panels or mounting screws, the bundled software includes Ahead's Nero Recode for compressing an 8.5GB DVD movie to fit on a 4.7GB disc. Although this is a useful extra, it can't compensate for this drive's disappointing DVD writing speeds.

Aopen's DSW2012P is cheap and very fast at writing CD-R discs, but has slow DVD writing performance. There are better drives here.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE DSW2012P DETAILS www.aopen.nl

- ✓ Includes Nero Recode; inexpensive
- ✗ Disappointing DVD writing speeds

ASUS
DRW-2014L1T

★★★

£30 inc VAT
From www.morecomputers.co.uk

Asus's DRW-2014L1T is one of only two internal DVD writers in this group to come in retail packaging with a set of accessories and installation instructions. It's also one of four drives with a SATA interface. It has a white alternative front panel and mounting screws, but the drive's disc-writing speeds were disappointingly inconsistent.

It was the fastest internal drive writing DVD+R discs, with a speed of 10.33X, and at writing CD-R discs, with 28.73X. However, it was slow at writing other disc types. Although it wasn't far behind its competitors when burning rewritable DVDs, it was the slowest drive at writing DVD-R and DVD+R DL discs and was one of only two drives to score below 5X when writing DVD-R DL discs.

These faults might be forgivable if the DRW-2014L1T were cheap, but it's one of the priciest internal DVD writers in the group. Even given the DRW-2014L1T's accessories, LiteOn's LH-20A1H is better value.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 14X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE DRW-2014L1T DETAILS <http://uk.asus.com>

- ✓ Fast at writing DVD+R and CD-R discs
- ✗ Otherwise disappointing performance

HP
dvd1035i

★★★

£30 inc VAT
From www.ebuyer.com

Along with Asus's DRW-2014L1T (left), HP's dvd1035i is one of only two internal DVD writers in the group to come in retail packaging. It includes an illustrated installation leaflet as well as mounting screws and Ahead's Nero Recode software for squeezing a two-layer DVD on to a single-layer disc.

Unfortunately, the dvd1035i is fairly slow at writing DVDs. It could write single-layer DVDs at 9.35X, which was one of the slowest speeds in our tests. Although HP claims the dvd1035i can write to DVD-R DL discs at 8X, it would sometimes fail to write a disc successfully unless it was set to burn at 2.4X, making it the slowest internal drive for writing DVD-R DL discs.

The dvd1035i's performance when writing other types of DVD was also unremarkable, although it was the fastest internal drive when writing CD-R discs, with a speed of 30.5X. LiteOn's LH-20A1H isn't quite as fast at writing CD-R discs but is faster at burning DVDs, so is a better buy.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE dvd1035i DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

- ✓ Fast CD-R performance; includes Nero Recode
- ✗ Slow DVD writing speeds

LG
GSA-H54L
(OEM)

★★★★★

£22 inc VAT
From www.pcnextday.co.uk

LG's GSA-H54L may be one of the cheapest internal DVD writers in the group, but it's also the only internal writer to come bundled with a copy of CyberLink's DVD playback software, PowerDVD.

The GSA-H54L was consistently quick in our tests. It was let down only by its sluggish speeds when writing CD-R and DVD+RW discs, although it wasn't far behind the front-runners in our DVD+RW test. These two results are forgivable, as it was one of the fastest writers in all our other benchmarks. It was the only internal burner to exceed 7X in our DVD-R DL test and was the second-fastest in the group in our DVD+R DL and single-layer DVD tests.

If you're on a tight budget the GSA-H54L is a good buy thanks to its generally quick performance and low price. However, LiteOn's LH-20A1H has better all-round performance, comes with Nero Recode and costs only a few pounds more.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 18X DVD-R, 18X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 10X DVD-R DL, 10X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE GSA-H54L DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com>

- ✓ Inexpensive; generally fast performance
- ✗ Sluggish CD-R and DVD+RW write speeds

LITEON
LH-20A1H
(OEM)

★★★★★

£28 inc VAT
From www.rlsupplies.co.uk

LiteOn's LH-20A1H may not be the cheapest DVD writer in our group, but it's still affordable at £28. It comes bundled with a copy of Nero Recode so you can fit a two-layer DVD movie on to a cheaper single-layer disc.

The LH-20A1H was consistently fast in our tests. It wrote single-layer DVDs at around 10X and burned double-layer discs at around 6X. It was the joint second-fastest internal DVD writer when writing DVD+RW discs, with a speed of 6.96X. It was also quick to write CD-R discs, with a speed of 28.54X. Although it wasn't the quickest writer in any of our tests, it was consistently among the fastest DVD burners in each one.

The LH-20A1H strikes the right balance between price, bundled software and consistently fast DVD-writing performance. Unless you need the best possible performance for a particular type of disc, it's a good buy, but Samsung's Super-WriteMaster is almost as quick and cheaper.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE LH-20A1H DETAILS www.liteonit.eu

- ✓ Consistently fast performance
- ✓ Includes Nero Recode

PIONEER
DVR-212BK
(OEM)

★★★

£26 inc VAT
From www.dabs.com

Pioneer's DVR-212BK is one of only three internal DVD writers in this group with a SATA interface. Like the two SATA Sony drives, it doesn't come with any software at all.

The DVR-212BK was the slowest burner in our CD-R test. With a speed of 23.44X, it was the only writer that couldn't exceed 25X. It fared better in our rewritable DVD tests where it was one of the fastest, writing DVD-RW discs at 5.5X and DVD+RW discs at 6.7X.

Unfortunately, its performance when burning single and double-layer DVDs wasn't as impressive. It was the slowest internal burner when writing DVD+R discs. It wrote DVD-R discs at 9.6X and both types of 8.5GB DVDs at just under 6X, which, while not the slowest speeds in the group, couldn't match the fastest burners in this group.

The DVR-212BK isn't a particularly fast DVD writer. If you're after a SATA drive, Sony NEC's AD-7191S is only a couple of pounds more and faster.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 18X DVD-R, 18X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 10X DVD-R DL, 10X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 40X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE DVR-212BK DETAILS www.pioneer.co.uk

- ✓ Good DVD+/-RW performance
- ✗ Otherwise average speeds; no software included

SAMSUNG Super-WriteMaster SH-S202 (OEM)

★★★★★

£25 inc VAT
From www.rlsupplies.co.uk



Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SH-S202 comes with Nero's Recode software. It doesn't just rely on the merits of its bundled software, though, as it's also very quick at burning discs.

This was the only internal DVD writer capable of writing DVD-R discs at 11X. It managed 7.69X when burning double-layer DVD-R discs, the fastest in the group.

It was also one of the quickest internal drives burning rewritable DVDs, especially DVD+RW discs. It fell behind the other internal writers when burning DVD+R discs with 9.57X, though it wasn't far behind its faster rivals.

Although the WriteMaster's DVD+R performance wasn't the best in the group, it's still a fast DVD writer with some useful software at a low price. It's our Best Buy internal DVD writer.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 12X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 40X CD-RW
PART CODE SH-S202

DETAILS www.samsungoms-europe.com

- ✓ Generally fast performance; includes Nero Recode
- ✗ Average DVD+R performance

SONY NEC OPTIARC AD-7173S (OEM)

★★★★

£25 inc VAT
From www.pcnextday.co.uk



Sony NEC's AD-7173S is the only DVD writer in the group that uses the Labelflash laser labelling system. However, since no software is included you'll have to buy DVD-writing software that supports Labelflash, such as Ahead's Nero, or download the free utility from <http://labelflash.jp/enjoy/softdl.html> to use it.

The AD-7173S was particularly quick at burning rewritable DVDs, managing just over 5.5X for DVD-RW discs and just less than 7X for DVD+RW. It was also quick at writing DVD+R discs, managing just under 10X, and wrote DVD+R DL discs at a respectable 6X. It wasn't as fast when writing to DVD-R and -R DL discs, where it was one of the slower DVD writers in the group with 9.46X and 5.37X.

Sony NEC's AD-7173S is inexpensive, but has inconsistent write speeds and doesn't come with any bundled software. If you need a SATA drive, Sony NEC's AD-7191S is quicker overall and costs only £3 more.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 18X DVD-R, 18X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE AD-7173S DETAILS www.sony-nec-optiarc.eu

- ✓ Fast rewritable DVD performance
- ✗ Average DVD-R/-R DL speeds; no software included

SONY NEC OPTIARC AD-7191S (OEM)

★★★★★

£28 inc VAT
From www.morecomputers.co.uk



Sony NEC's AD-7191S is similar to the other internal Sony NEC Optiarc burner, the AD-7173S. Both use a SATA connection and have similar specifications, but the AD-7191S is rated at 20X for single-layer DVDs instead of 18X. Unlike the AD-7173S, it etches labels on to LightScribe discs rather than Labelflash ones.

Like the other DVD writers in the group, the AD-7191S couldn't reach its stated 20X speed, but it did manage a fast 10X when writing DVD-R discs. It wrote DVD+R discs at 9.65X and double-layer DVDs at around 6X. It was faster writing to DVD+RW than to DVD-RW discs, but managed high speeds for both.

The AD-7191S is a fast DVD writer, but it doesn't come with any software. It's the best SATA drive in the group, but if you don't mind using a PATA interface instead then Samsung's Super-WriteMaster or LiteOn's LH-20A1H are quicker.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW
PART CODE AD-7191S-0B

DETAILS www.sony-nec-optiarc.eu

- ✓ Consistently fast performance
- ✗ No software included

FRECOM DVD RW Recorder LS 20x USB-2

★★★

£45 inc VAT
From www.dabs.com



Freecom's external DVD writer is the only one here to come with a set of blank media. It also looks stylish thanks to its silver enclosure. Sadly, it's not very fast at writing DVDs.

It managed to burn single-layer DVDs at just under 9.4X which lags behind both the LG and Samsung drives. It's not very quick at burning double-layer discs either, with just over 5.5X for both types of 8.5GB disc.

The LS was much faster at writing DVD-RW discs. It was the fastest external burner in our group, and the only one to exceed 6X. When burning DVD+RW discs, however, it was the slowest external writer in the group, managing only 5.13X. It did write CD-R discs at 29.49X, though, which wasn't far behind the best.

Although Freecom's LS is fast at burning DVD-RW discs, its performance is otherwise disappointing. Samsung's Super-WriteMaster is a better external drive.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW
PART CODE 29085 DETAILS www.freecom.com

- ✓ Fast DVD+RW burning
- ✗ Otherwise disappointing performance

HP dvd1040e

★★

£44 inc VAT
From www.aria.co.uk



HP's dvd1040e looks rather plain compared to the stylish Freecom and LG drives. It comes with a good software bundle, however, which includes the excellent Nero Recode video-encoding package. Unfortunately, its overall DVD burning performance was below average in this group.

The dvd1040e was the slowest external desktop burner in both our single-layer and two-layer DVD tests. It was also at the bottom of the table when writing DVD-RW discs, but it fared better burning DVD+RWs, where it managed 6.55X, putting it third in the external DVD writer group. It was the second-fastest external writer when writing CD-R discs, with a speed of 30.29X, which was just behind LiteOn's Super AllWrite.

HP's dvd1040e is fast at writing CD-R discs and reasonably fast at burning DVD+RWs, but its performance is otherwise disappointing. Overall, it's the slowest external desktop DVD writer in our group. Samsung's faster Super-WriteMaster also comes with Nero Recode and is a better buy.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW
PART CODE dvd1040e DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

- ✓ Includes Nero Recode
- ✗ Slow DVD writing speeds

LACIE Portable DVD+/-RW with LightScribe

★★★★

£80 inc VAT
From www.lacie.com/uk/shop



LaCie's latest portable DVD writer has a brown enclosure. It won't be to everyone's taste, but it is distinctive. Although it couldn't match its claimed 8X speed for burning single-layer DVDs, it was still one of the quicker portable burners in our group, managing around 5X when writing DVD+/-R discs.

It was the second-fastest portable when burning double-layer DVD-R discs, with 3.38X, which is close to its claimed 4X speed. Sadly, it was the slowest external drive when writing DVD+R DL discs, managing only 2.29X. It was also the second-slowest external drive when burning rewritable DVDs, but it wasn't far behind the other portables in the DVD+RW test.

The LaCie drive's biggest flaw is its price. At £80, it's the second-most expensive external drive in our group. If it were cheaper its uneven performance might be forgivable, but LG's GSA-E50N is faster and better value.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 8X DVD-R, 8X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-R DL, 4X DVD+R DL, 5X DVD-RAM, 24X CD-R, 20X CD-RW
PART CODE 301230EK DETAILS www.lacie.com

- ✓ Quick single-layer DVD, DVD-R DL and CD-R writing
- ✗ Poor double-layer DVD performance; expensive

EXTERNAL DVD WRITERS

LG GSA-E50N

★★★★★

£54 inc VAT

From www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop


LG's GSA-E50N is one of the cheapest portable DVD writers in the group. Its white enclosure makes it look sleek.

The GSA-E50N performed consistently well in all our tests. It was the fastest portable writer in both our two-layer DVD burn tests, where it was the only drive to exceed 3.5X, although it couldn't reach its claimed 6X speed. It came a close second to the Storage Depot drive in our rewritable DVD and DVD-R benchmarks. Although it was the slowest portable DVD writer in our DVD+R test, it wasn't far behind the others, with an overall 5X speed.

Like its desktop counterpart, the GSA-E50L, the drive can password-protect discs with the included version of Nero. Files are still visible in Windows Explorer but can't be opened without a downloadable utility and your password.

The password protection is a useful extra but, more importantly, the GSA-E50N is a fast and inexpensive portable DVD writer. It's our Best Buy portable DVD writer.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 8X DVD-R, 8X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-R DL, 6X DVD+R DL, 5X DVD-RAM, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW

PART CODE GSA-E50N DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com>

- ✓ Consistently fast performance
- ✓ Can password-protect discs

LG GSA-E50L

★★★★★

£41 inc VAT

From www.dabs.com


LG's GSA-E50L has an attractive gloss black design with a ridged underside that stops it slipping and sliding around on your desk. Like its portable counterpart, the E50N, it can create password-protected discs. Filenames can still be viewed in Windows Explorer, but it will deter casual snoopers.

The GSA-E50L was the second-fastest external desktop drive in all our single-layer and double-layer DVD tests. It came close to reaching 11X in our DVD-R benchmark and was the only external burner other than Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-S204 to exceed 7X when writing double-layer DVDs.

It's also fast at backing up files to rewritable DVDs. It was the second-fastest burner in our DVD+RW test and the third-quickest when burning DVD-RWs. The drive came a respectable third in our CD-R test, writing discs at just under 30X speed.

The GSA-E50L is a fast, attractive external DVD writer, but Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-S204 desktop writer is even faster.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 10X DVD-R DL, 10X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE GSA-E50L DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com>

- ✓ Consistently fast performance
- ✓ Can password-protect discs

LITEON Super AllWrite LH-20A1PX-500C

★★★★

£38 inc VAT

From www.rlsupplies.co.uk


LiteOn's Super AllWrite is the cheapest external desktop DVD writer in the group. Its software bundle includes Nero's Recode.

The Super AllWrite was the third-fastest burner in our DVD-R test, burning discs at 10.24X, but it lagged behind the Samsung and LG drives when burning DVD+R discs. It was the fastest external drive in our CD-R test.

The drive couldn't match the speeds of the Samsung and LG writers when burning double-layer DVDs. Both of these drives exceeded 7X speed, but the Super AllWrite couldn't manage 6X. It wasn't particularly fast at burning rewritable DVDs, either, with 5.16X for DVD-RWs and 6.53X for DVD+RWs, putting it behind the Freecom and Samsung drives.

LiteOn's Super AllWrite may be attractive if you're on a very tight budget, but LG's GSA-E50L costs only a few pounds more and is much quicker at writing DVDs.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE LH-20A1PX-500C DETAILS www.liteonit.eu

- ✓ Inexpensive; includes Nero Recode
- ✗ Not particularly fast

SAMSUNG Super-WriteMaster SE-T084L

★★★

£100 inc VAT

From www.komplett.co.uk


Samsung's portable Super-WriteMaster is the only drive in the group with a slot-loading mechanism. This looks smart but won't accept 3in or odd-shaped discs without the risk of damage or jamming. Powering the other portable DVD writers in the group over USB doesn't affect their performance, but Samsung warns that the SE-T084L will be limited to 4X speed when not plugged into the mains.

In our tests, the Super-WriteMaster couldn't burn DVDs at faster than 3X when powered over USB and was limited to 9.64X when writing CD-R discs. Performance improved using the included mains adaptor, but it was quicker at burning DVD+R/+RW/+R DL discs than it was writing DVD-R/-RW/-R DL discs.

Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-T084L is poor value. It's the most expensive DVD writer in our group at £100, yet is painfully slow when not plugged into the mains. LG's GSA-E50N is a far better portable DVD writer.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 8X DVD-R, 8X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-R DL, 6X DVD+R DL, 5X DVD-RAM, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW

PART CODE SE-T084L

DETAILS www.samsung-europe.com

- ✓ Includes Nero Recode; good performance on mains
- ✗ Poor performance on USB power; expensive

SAMSUNG Super-WriteMaster SE-S204

★★★★★

£47 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk


Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-S204 is the only DVD writer in the group with a claimed 16X DVD+R DL writing speed. Although it couldn't achieve this in our tests, it was still the fastest external burner when writing DVD+R DL and DVD-R DL discs, with 7.56X and 7.51X, although LG's GSA-E50L wasn't far behind in both cases.

The Super-WriteMaster also distinguished itself in our other benchmarks. It was the only external burner to achieve 11X in our DVD-R test and the only one to exceed 10X when burning DVD+R discs. It was also the only writer to exceed 7X speed when writing DVD+RW discs, although it had to settle for second place in our DVD-RW test. At just under 27X, it was the slowest external desktop burner when writing CD-R discs.

Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-S204 is a fast DVD writer with a good bundled software package. It's our Best Buy desktop DVD writer.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 20X DVD-R, 20X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 12X DVD-R DL, 16X DVD+R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW

PART CODE SE-S204

DETAILS www.samsung-europe.com

- ✓ Consistently fast performance
- ✓ Includes Nero Recode

STORAGE DEPOT DVD Slimline Multiformat USB2.0

★★★★★

£70 inc VAT

From Storage Depot 0118 375 8308



The instructions for Storage Depot's portable external DVD burner warn that if you want to use it away from the mains you have to plug in the supplied battery pack. We had no problems with the drive plugged in over USB, though.

The drive was the fastest portable burner in our single-layer and rewritable DVD tests. It was the only one to exceed 5.1X when burning single-layer discs. LG's GSA-E50N was slightly faster when writing double-layer DVDs, but the Slimline was still one of the quickest portable drives in the group. It was also one of the fastest portable burners in our CD-R test, second only to LaCie's portable writer.

The black metal design feels sturdy and looks classy, although you may feel conspicuous when using it in public places due to its flashing blue lights. Storage Depot's portable writer is fast, but LG's GSA-E50N costs £16 less and is faster when writing double-layer DVDs.

EXTERNAL DVD WRITER 8X DVD-R, 8X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-R DL, 4X DVD+R DL, 5X DVD-RAM, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW

PART CODE USB-DVD-MOBILE

DETAILS www.storage-depot.co.uk

- ✓ Fast single-layer and rewritable DVD speeds
- ✗ Conspicuous appearance

BENCHMARKS



Desktop



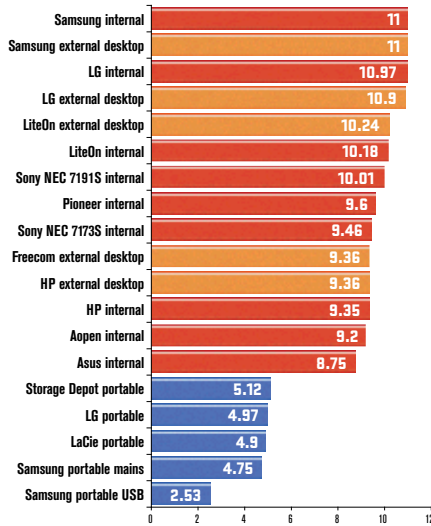
Portable



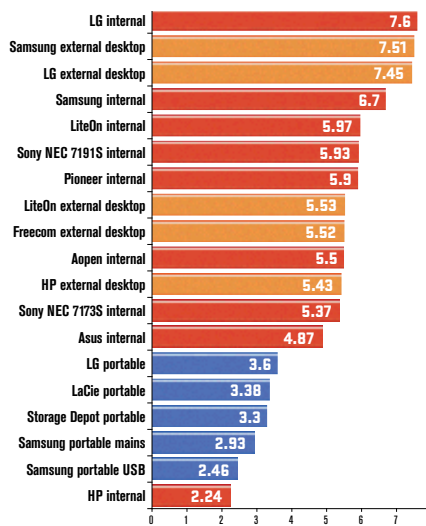
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DVD burning Burn times for single-layer, two-layer and RW discs

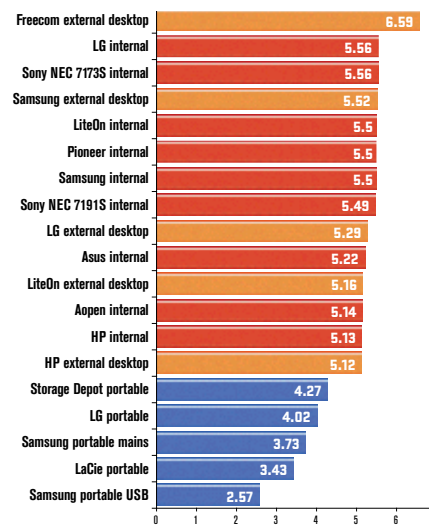
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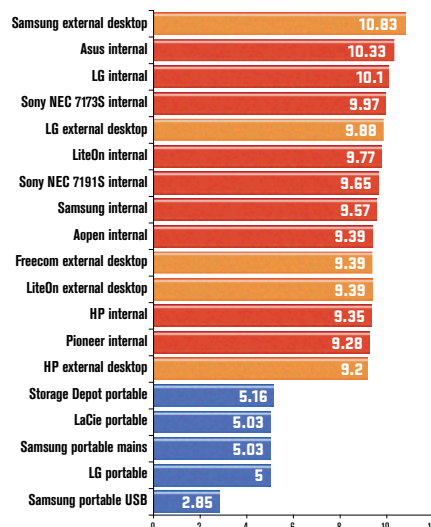
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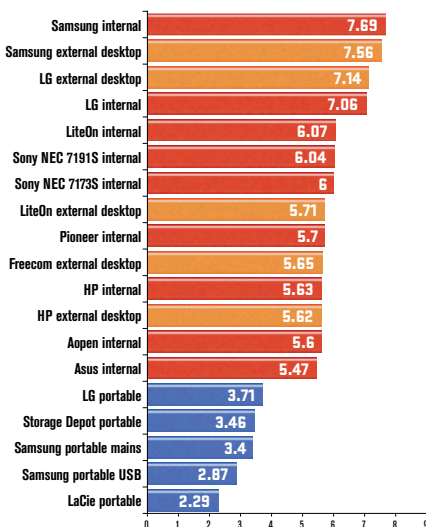
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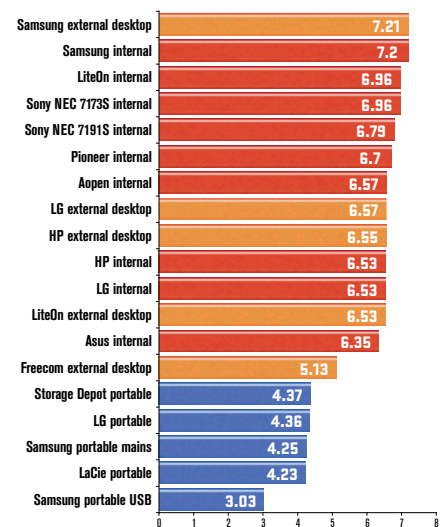
DVD+R



DVD+R DL



DVD+RW



Labs verdict DVD writers

The results of our testing show that you shouldn't take manufacturers' speed claims at face value. DVD write speeds varied widely, especially in the external writer group, but in the end there were three clear winners.

If you want an internal drive, Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SH-S202 was quick in our tests and comes bundled with useful software. It's also one of the cheapest DVD writers in this test and wins our Best Buy award.

If your PC doesn't have room for another internal drive, or if you don't want to crack open your computer's case, you have two choices. Samsung's Super-WriteMaster SE-S204, like its internal counterpart, is fast at burning discs and has a useful software bundle. It's our Best Buy external desktop drive.

If you want a DVD writer for use with your laptop, LG's GSA-E50N is our pick. It looks great, was fast in our disc-burning tests when powered via USB and can even password-protect your discs. Best of all, it was the cheapest portable drive in the group. It wins our Best Buy award.

INTERNAL DVD WRITER



EXTERNAL DVD WRITERS



How we test DVD writers

Each of the drives were installed in the same PC. To ensure that our results show the speed of each drive, rather than that of the software being used, we used the same version of Ahead's Nero 7 Premium DVD writing utility to test each drive. All the drives were updated with the latest firmware before testing and we tested each one with branded Verbatim and Memorex discs.

Our tests are designed to show the performance you can expect from each DVD writer when performing everyday tasks such as burning a video DVD from movie files that you've edited or backing up files from your hard disk. We filled DVD-R, DVD+R and double-layer DVDs with a set of 1GB and 100MB files similar to the contents of a video DVD disc. When testing rewritable DVD-RW and DVD+RW discs, we simulated a typical system backup by filling them with 4.4GB of smaller office and system files. We also timed burning an 80-minute audio CD.

After recording the time taken by each drive to finish each of our tests, we converted these times into a speed rating. This allows you to compare one drive against another, as well as compare the actual performance of a drive against the ratings quoted by the manufacturer. These quoted speeds can be found in the table on page 120.



DVD WRITERS

INTERNAL DVD WRITERS

MANUFACTURER	AOPEN	ASUS	HP	LG	LITEON	PIONEER	SAMSUNG	SONY NEC OPTIARC	SONY NEC OPTIARC
Model	DSW2012P (OEM)	DRW-2014L1T	dvd1035i	GSA-H54L (OEM)	LH-20A1H (OEM)	DVR-212BK (OEM)	Super-WriteMaster SH-S202 (OEM)	AD-7173S (OEM)	AD-7191S (OEM)
Rating	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Type	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer
Interface	UltraDMA 66	SATA 150	UltraDMA 33	UltraDMA 33	UltraDMA 66	SATA 150	UltraDMA 33	SATA 150	SATA 150
Buffer	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB
Dimensions (HxWxD)	52x147x175mm	42x147x172mm	52x147x172mm	52x147x171mm	52x147x171mm	52x147x180mm	52x147x170mm	52x147x176mm	42x147x171mm
Weight	702g	697g	686g	734g	610g	802g	702g	698g	594g
QUOTED READ									
CD-ROM	48X	48X	48X	48X	48X	40X	48X	48X	48X
DVD-ROM	16X	16X	16X	16X	16X	16X	16X	16X	16X
DVD-ROM dual-layer	16X	8X	16X	12X	16X	12X	16X	16X	16X
DVD-RAM	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X
QUOTED WRITE									
CD-R/RW	48X/32X	48X/32X	48X/32X	48X/32X	48X/32X	40X/32X	48X/40X	48X/32X	48X/32X
DVD+R	20X	20X	20X	18X	20X	18X	20X	18X	20X
DVD+RW	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X
DVD-R	20X	20X	20X	18X	20X	18X	20X	18X	20X
DVD-RW	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X
DVD+R DL	8X	8X	8X	10X	8X	10X	12X	8X	8X
DVD-R DL	8X	8X	8X	10X	8X	10X	12X	8X	8X
DVD-RAM	12X	14X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X	12X
FEATURES									
Laser labelling	No	LightScribe	No	LightScribe	LightScribe	No	No	Labelflash	LightScribe
Autoplay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multi-session	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mount Rainier	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
EXTRAS									
DVD playback software	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.0.1.3b	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.2.3.2	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.0.1.3b	CyberLink PowerDVD 7.00.2414	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.2.3.2	None	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.10.1	None	None
DVD/CD-burning software	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.2.3.3	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.5.14.4	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.2.3.3	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.5.13.2	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.5.13.1	None	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.9.6.4	None	None
Blank media	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Other standard accessories	None	Mounting screws, one alternative front panel	Mounting screws	None	None	None	None	None	None
BUYING INFORMATION									
Price including VAT	£22	£30	£30	£22	£28	£26	£25	£25	£28
Supplier	www.pcnextday.co.uk	www.morecomputers.co.uk	www.ebuyer.com	www.pcnextday.co.uk	www.rlsupplies.co.uk	www.dabs.com	www.rlsupplies.co.uk	www.pcnextday.co.uk	www.morecomputers.co.uk
Details	www.aopen.nl	http://uk.asus.com	www.hp.co.uk	http://uk.lge.com	www.liteonit.eu	www.pioneer.co.uk	www.samsungoms-europe.com	www.sonymec-optiarc.eu	www.sonymec-optiarc.eu
Part code	DSW2012P	DRW-2014L1T	dvd1035i	GSA-H54L	LH-20A1H	DVR-212BK	SH-S202	AD-7173S	AD-7191S-0B

EXTERNAL DVD WRITERS

MANUFACTURER	FRECOM	HP	LACIE	LG	LG	LITEON	SAMSUNG	SAMSUNG	STORAGE DEPOT	
Model	DVD RW Recorder LS 20x USB-2	dvd1040e	Portable DVD+-RW with LightScribe	GSA-E50N	GSA-E50L	Super AllWrite LH-20A1PX-500C	Super-WriteMaster SE-T084L	Super-WriteMaster SE-S204	DVD Slimline Multiformat USB2.0	
Rating	★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	
Type	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	External DVD writer	
Interface	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	USB Hi-Speed	
Buffer	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB	
Dimensions (HxWxD)	49x165x251mm	59x176x210mm	23x138x159mm	22x156x168mm	50x162x230mm	55x163x191mm	19x142x158mm	50x161x231mm	24x154x158mm	
Weight	1.2kg	1.2kg	302g	386g	1.2kg	1.1kg	426g	1.2kg	514g	
QUOTED READ										
CD-ROM	48X	48X	24X	24X	48X	48X	24X	48X	24X	
DVD-ROM	16X	16X	8X	8X	16X	16X	8X	16X	8X	
DVD-ROM dual-layer	8X	16X	8X	8X	12X	16X	8X	12X	8X	
DVD-RAM	12X	12X	5X	5X	12X	12X	5X	12X	5X	
QUOTED WRITE										
CD-R/RW	48X/32X	48X/32X	24X/20X	24X/24X	48X/32X	48X/32X	24X/24X	48X/32X	24X/24X	
DVD+R	20X	20X	8X	8X	20X	20X	8X	20X	8X	
DVD+RW	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	8X	
DVD-R	20X	20X	8X	8X	20X	20X	8X	20X	8X	
DVD-RW	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	6X	
DVD+R DL	8X	8X	4X	6X	10X	8X	6X	16X	4X	
DVD-R DL	8X	8X	4X	6X	10X	8X	4X	12X	4X	
DVD-RAM	12X	12X	5X	5X	12X	12X	5X	12X	5X	
FEATURES										
Laser labelling	LightScribe	LightScribe	LightScribe	No	LightScribe	No	LightScribe	LightScribe	No	
Autoplay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Multi-session	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Mount Rainier	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	
EXTRAS										
DVD playback software	Roxio CinePlayer 2.3.1	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.0.1.3b	Sonic CinePlayer 3.5	CyberLink PowerDVD 7 (two-channel version)	CyberLink PowerDVD 7 (two-channel version)	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.0.1.3b	Ahead Nero Media Player 1.4.0.32	Ahead Nero Showtime 3.10.1	Ahead Nero ShowTime 3.0.1.6	
DVD/CD-burning software	Roxio Easy Media Creator 9.0.189	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.2.3.3	Roxio Easy Media Creator XE 9.0.614	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.9.6	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.9.6	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.2.3.3	Ahead Nero Express 6.6.0.19d	Ahead Nero Express 7.9.6.4	Ahead Nero Essentials 7.2.3.2	
Blank media	5x LightScribe CD-R	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
Other standard accessories	USB cable, power adaptor, European plug adaptor	USB cable, power adaptor and vertical stand	USB cable, USB-to-5V cable, power adaptor, European plug adaptor	USB cable, USB-to-5V cable	USB cable, power adaptor	USB cable, power adaptor and vertical stand	USB cable, carry case, power adaptor	USB cable, power adaptor and vertical stand	Twin USB cable, power adaptor, battery pack	
BUYING INFORMATION										
Price including VAT	£45	£44	£80	£54	£41	£38	£100	£47	£70	
Supplier	www.dabs.com	www.aria.co.uk	www.lacie.com/uk/shop	www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop	www.dabs.com	www.rlsupplies.co.uk	www.komplett.co.uk	www.amazon.co.uk	Storage Depot 0118 375 8308	
Details	www.freecom.com	www.hp.co.uk	www.lacie.com	http://uk.lge.com	http://uk.lge.com	www.liteonit.eu	www.samsungoms-europe.com	www.samsungoms-europe.com	www.storagedepot.co.uk	
Part code	29085	dvd1040e	301230EK	GSA-E50N	GSA-E50L	LH-20A1PX-500C	SE-T084L	SE-S204	USB-DVD-MOBILE	